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# Toward a Physical Cultural Studies

**Michael L. Silk**

University of Bath

**David L. Andrews**

University of Maryland

Within this paper we offer what is hopefully both a suggestive (as opposed to definitive) and generative (as opposed to suppressive) signposting of the ontological, epistemological, and methodological boundaries framing the putative intellectual project that is Physical Cultural Studies (PCS). Ground in a commitment toward engaging varied dimensions or expressions of *active physicality*, we deliberate on an understanding of, and approach to, the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. Further, drawing on Toby Miller, we suggest that this approach requires a motivation toward progressive social change. We consider the political and axiological contingencies of PCS, how it is differentiated from the “sociology of sport,” and how we may produce the type of knowledge that is able to intervene into the broader social world and *make a difference*. We are sure many will disagree—perhaps with good reason—with our assumptions. Indeed, such differences are welcomed for we feel that there is greater progressive potential in a field in tension, in healthy contestation, and, in which debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, political intent, method, interpretation, expression, and impact flow freely.

Dans le cadre de cet article, nous offrons ce que nous espérons être une indication suggestive (par opposition à définitive) et génératrice (par opposition à répressive) des limites ontologiques, épistémologiques et méthodologiques formulées dans le projet intellectuel présumé que sont les études culturelles physiques (PCS). Étant profondément attachés à nous engager dans une variété de dimensions ou d'expressions de physicalité active, nous examinons la compréhension, l'approche des pratiques corporelles, les discussions et les subjectivités à travers lesquelles des corps actifs deviennent organisés, représentés et expérimentés vis-à-vis des relations avec le pouvoir social. De plus, nous appuyant sur Toby Miller, nous suggérons que cette approche requiert une motivation vers un changement

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Silk is with the Department of Education, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Bath, Bath, England. Andrews is with Physical Cultural Studies Program, Department of Kinesiology, School of Public Health, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA.

social progressif. Nous prenons en considération les éventualités politiques et axiologiques des études physiques culturelles, la façon dont elles se différencient de la « sociologie du sport » et la manière dont nous pourrions générer le type de connaissances capables d'émerger dans le monde social plus vaste et *faire une différence*. Nous sommes conscients des possibles divergences, valides à juste titre peut-être, que nos hypothèses pourraient susciter. En effet, de telles différences sont appréciées car nous avons le sentiment qu'il se trouve un plus grand potentiel progressiste dans un domaine en état de tension et de contestation positives et dans lequel les débats concernant l'ontologie, l'épistémologie, les intentions politiques, les méthodes, l'interprétation, l'expression et l'impact circulent en toute liberté.

Perhaps more than anything else, our motivations for this paper (and indeed the special issue) are rooted in a growing unease with our own intellectual output, broader social relevance, and contribution. Rather than writing from a position of self-righteous authority (indeed, we are in no position to do so), within this paper we occupy what is tantamount to an antithetical location: edging all-too closely toward a state of midcareer routinization—if not outright redundancy—we have both turned to Physical Cultural Studies as a means of awakening ourselves from the threat of impending academic torpor. However, this project—and we hope this paper—is not as narcissistic as it would appear. Indeed, we contend that the gnawing dissatisfaction we have with our very intellectual beings, is perhaps the corollary of a debilitating blend of introspective and ineffectual parochialism that has plagued the Sociology of Sport more generally. We thus, in this paper seek to both empower and compel ourselves, and others within the academy, to develop and apply critically-informed physical culture-oriented research in a manner that *impacts*, and is *meaningful* to, the range of communities who we have the potential to touch.

## Differentiating Physical Cultural Studies

With all due respect to Janet Harris and her significant contribution to the development of the Sociology of Sport, we are compelled to take issue with her characterization of the field:

As long as there is agreement on conceptualizing “sociology of sport” to include a broad range of phenomena related to various forms of physical activity and societal conceptions of human bodies, and as long as it is inclusive of a variety of social science perspectives, this name will probably be acceptable to most. (Harris, 2006, p. 87)

Within this statement Harris acknowledges the existence of a community of scholars for whom sport is by no means their sole focus of inquiry, and who equally are not exclusively informed by sociological theories and methods. Nonetheless, Harris suggests that the “sociology of sport”, if construed in the widest possible terms, is a tolerable compromise for all concerned parties. Again with the utmost respect, we could not disagree more with Harris' viewpoint. First, because it devalues the sociology of sport as an important subdisciplinary entity; although sociology may be in the throes of perpetual crisis, it remains an important element

of the social sciences. Second, while historically devalued within the academy, there is considerable recent evidence pointing to the recognition of sport as an important social and cultural phenomenon, as illustrated in the increased scale and scope of sport-focused work of scholars from across the social sciences and humanities. Thus, according to Harris' position, the sociology of sport would be rendered a generalist obfuscation, rather than a keenly defined intellectual project.

As well as being counter production to the realization of the sociology of sport's intellectual practice and promise, Harris' viewpoint fails to take into account important developments that have, somewhat ironically, largely been generated from within it. Over the past two decades—and doubtless informed by the intensifying cultural turn from the 1980s, which precipitated the fabled *bringing of the body back in* to the social sciences and humanities (Frank, 1990)—many sociology of sport researchers (re)discovered the body (and thereby issues of physicality) as the empirical core of the field of study (c.f. Gruneau, 1991; Hargreaves, 1986, 1987; Harvey & Sparks, 1991; Ingham, 1985; Loy, 1991). This conclusive embodiment of the sociology of sport facilitated the broadening of the field's empirical scope to include a wider range of physical cultural forms (including, but certainly not restricted to, sport) leading to the tacit physical culturalization of the sociology of sport (or at the very least, a tangible constituency within it). Thus, what we are suggesting is that the sociology of sport has itself spawned an intellectual offshoot that can neither, nor should, no longer be contained within it. Instead, we are suggesting the acknowledgment and development of a complementary field of study for those interested in furthering the understanding of physical culture as those “cultural practices in which the physical body—the way it moves, is represented, has meanings assigned to it, and is imbued with power—is central” (Vertinsky, quoted in Smishek, 2004). This is Physical Cultural Studies (henceforth, PCS) whose further explication provides the focus of this article, and the special issue more generally. Of course, a number of scholars have already been responsible for sowing or nurturing the roots of PCS (c.f. Duncan, 2007; Hargreaves & Vertinsky, 2007; Ingham, 1997; McDonald, 1999; Pronger, 1998); PCS seedlings which we are merely attempting to propagate, to reach the field's next stage of intellectual growth.

Our aim, then, in this propositional—and perhaps provocative—prefatory discussion, is not to somehow neatly clear up and tidy away the fledgling PCS project. Rather, we aim to merely raise issues, ask questions, and provide a space for thoughtful reflexivity concerning PCS. Not that we are advancing a singular PCS with some kind of proselytizing zeal; the ill-advised goal of establishing a PCS orthodoxy being, reassuringly, an impossibility. Instead, we are simply advancing PCS as a fluid and diverse approach or sensibility—a permanently and self-consciously in-process intellectual formation, if you will—directed against various tendencies (empirical, ontological, epistemological, and methodological), which we view as resulting from a presently inhibiting and ill-defined iteration of the sociology of sport with which we are confronted.

In the broadest sense, within this discussion we offer the very idea of PCS as a project to which some—by no means all—will hopefully contribute, appropriate, and advance, as they forge their own intellectual furrows. We are, however, under no illusion that while a small minority may view the development of a PCS (or a likeminded intellectual initiative) as being a long overdue necessity, for the vast majority of the *Sociology of Sport Journal* readership, it is likely to be either

a superfluous upstart, or a point of wholesale unfamiliarity. So, in the spirit of invigorating critical dialogue and contestation, and in combination with the other papers in this special edition, our intent within this discussion is to propose a set of approaches to *active physicality* that attempt to represent the order of things within “the field” of PCS.

At this juncture, it is perhaps appropriate to revisit a rudimentary formulation of PCS previously articulated (Andrews, 2008); an understanding that this special issue looks to implicitly problematize, and explicitly extend. According to this preliminary definitional statement:

Physical Cultural Studies (PCS) advances the critical and theoretical analysis of physical culture, in all its myriad forms. These include sport, exercise, health, dance, and movement related practices, which PCS research locates and analyzes within the broader social, political, economic, and technological contexts in which they are situated. More specifically, PCS is dedicated to the contextually based understanding of the corporeal practices, discourses, and subjectivities through which active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. PCS thus identifies the role played by physical culture in reproducing, and sometimes challenging, particular class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms and differences. Through the development and strategic dissemination of potentially empowering forms of knowledge and understanding, PCS seeks to illuminate, and intervene into, sites of physical cultural injustice and inequity. Furthermore, since physical culture is both manifest and experienced in different forms, PCS adopts a multi- method approach toward engaging the empirical (including ethnography and autoethnography, participant observation, discourse and media analysis, and contextual analysis). PCS advances an equally fluid theoretical vocabulary, utilizing concepts and theories from a variety of disciplines (including cultural studies, economics, history, media studies, philosophy, sociology, and urban studies) in engaging and interpreting the particular aspect of physical culture under scrutiny. (Andrews, 2008, pp. 54-55)

Although this definition of PCS is clearly rooted in the author’s own intellectual proclivities, it does belie some of the dimensions which need to be considered within wider debates pertaining to future possibilities and imaginings of PCS.

Empirically, PCS identifies the body—and even more specifically the active body—as the central focus of its intellectual labor. Physically active bodies—and the subjectivities they inhabit, perform, and embody—may appear natural (an authentic expression of some biological essence), yet this masks their sociocultural constitution (Pronger, 1998). In problematizing such assumptions—and thereby countering the scientific knowledges and naturalizing truths that have commandeered the body as an object of inquiry—PCS is a project motivated by the need to better understand the sociocultural organization, representation, and experience of active embodiment. As Ingham (1997, p. 176) noted:

all of us share genetically endowed bodies, but to talk about physical culture requires that we try to understand how the genetically endowed is socially constituted or socially constructed, as well as socially constituting and constructing.

Crucially, Ingham's (1997) understanding implored researchers to venture beyond the relatively narrow (if admittedly ill-defined) sporting domain. For Ingham, and numerous others who presently exist and operate under the increasingly nebulous Sociology of Sport label, there are numerous ways of *being* physically active which demand critical attention. For them, limiting their scope of inquiry to sport is as inappropriate, as it is artificial. Furthermore:

*Sport* is a vague and imprecise noun that fails to capture the empirical breadth of the work carried out within the sociology of sport. In what the poststructuralists among us would refer to as a *sea of empty signifiers*, *sport* is arguably one of the most-highly contested and least useful nouns with which to frame an area of study. (Andrews, 2008, p. 50, *emphasis in original*)

While PCS develops as a complementary field to the sociology of sport, we would also suggest that the latter pays closer and more concerted attention to discerning that which constitutes its object of analysis. In addition to "sport", PCS scholars are drawn to a range of empirical sites, including but by no means restricted to: exercise, fitness, health, dance, movement, leisure, recreation, daily living, and work-related activities. Differently put, and admittedly stating the obvious, the focus of PCS runs the whole gamut of physical culture. While there are numerous differences between PCS and the sociology of sport (many of which will be discussed herein), this empirical breadth is perhaps the most fundamental. Of course, the boundaries between the various forms of physical culture are frequently indistinct and, as a result, largely arbitrary. Physical culture's ontological complexity is also compounded by the fact that each of its various dimensions can be engaged or experienced in multiple ways: they, quite literally, incorporate different motivations for, and practices of, organizing and regulating human movement.

PCS' explicit focus on the critical analysis of a diverse array of cultural physicalities, is also precisely that which differentiates it from the wider, if itself highly differentiated, field of cultural studies. The very use of the term cultural studies is indeed open to criticism, and at the very least should be the prompt for considered debate. According to Andrews (2008), PCS is virtually compelled to exhibit the critical contextualism of a *particular* understanding of cultural studies (c.f. Grossberg, 1997b; Hall, 1986), as well as advancing the more *general* cultural studies' preoccupation with illuminating the [physical] cultural operations and experiences of power and power relations. While the latter assumption may be widely acceptable, the former directive is perhaps overly prescriptive. Indeed, although Andrews (2008) was clearly advancing a *Physical-Cultural Studies* (a Cultural Studies, specifically understood, of the physical), it may well be that a *Physical Cultural-Studies* (the critical study of physical culture borrowing from a range of intellectual inputs, a significant one of which may be Cultural Studies) may be the most productive trajectory for PCS as it seeks to forge its own intellectual formation and identity.

Thus far, we have identified what we consider to be the primary empirical and ontological factors that differentiate PCS from other fields of inquiry, most notably from the sociology of sport. Within the following sections, we attempt to address what we believe to be critical (and self-reflexive) deliberations pertaining to the epistemological, methodological, and axiological contingencies of PCS. Some of

these will be familiar and compliment that which characterizes the sociology of sport. Other considerations and sensibilities may well be less familiar, and counter, if not directly oppose, the philosophical underpinnings of, and processes of “doing,” the sociology of sport. These discussions lead to a preliminary examination of how PCS can be practiced, and the mechanisms through which such practices can be judged.

## The Epistemological, Political, and Axiological Praxis of PCS

While there is not space within this paper to delineate an in-depth genealogy of cultural studies, we do feel it import to locate what we understand as the project of PCS. The PCS project is significantly informed by the “Hallian” (McGuigan, 2006) version of cultural studies that emerged and developed at the University of Birmingham, England’s, *Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies* (CCCS) in the 1960s, and subsequently globalized, to the extent that arguably the most productive venues for cultural studies research are now to be found in North America and Australasia (Grossberg, 1997b; Lee, 2003). For the purposes of brevity, cultural studies can be characterized as a critical sensibility and approach toward interpreting culture’s role in the construction and experience of the “lived milieus of power” (Grossberg, 1997a, p. 8). PCS consciously incorporates this concern with excavating how active bodies become organized, represented, and experienced in relation to the operations of social power. Moreover, it does so in a manner that faithfully imitates another cultural studies precept: it is radically contextual in its approach and intent (Andrews, 2002). To operate then within a contextual PCS strategy means recognizing that physical cultural forms (e.g., practices, discourses, and subjectivities) can only be understood by the way in which they are *articulated* into a particular set of complex social, economic, political, and technological relationships that comprise the social context; recognizing that “there are no necessary correspondences in history, but history is always the production of such connections or correspondences” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 53). As the Marx of the *Grundrisse* informed us, cultural forms (e.g., practices, products, institutions, organizations) comprise “a rich aggregate of many determinations and relations” (Marx, quoted in McLellan, 1977, p. 351). Determinate relations thereby do exist, they just cannot be guaranteed in advance: hence, a *Physical Culture Without Guarantees* (c.f. Hall, 1996).

Physical culture can never be substantial (possessing some fixed, immutable essence). Rather, it is unavoidably relational, and always in process: its contemporaneous iteration providing a persuasive—if illusionary—semblance of fixity within what is, in actuality, an ever-changing world. Yet, in the broadest sense, the omnifarious planes of physicality represent a “pressure point of complex modern societies” (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 352). These planes are “sites” or “point(s) of intersection, and of negotiation of radically different kinds of determination and semiosis;” a place where social forces, discourses, institutions, and processes congregate, congeal, and are contested in a manner which contributes to the shaping of human relations, subjectivities, and experiences in particular, contextually contingent ways (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 352). In the more specific sense, the physical comprises a litany of “events,” the moments of “practice that crystallizes

diverse temporal and social trajectories” (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 352) through which individuals negotiate their subjective identities. Following Frow and Morris (2000), the physical is a complex multilayered site replete with numerous types of events can and do “happen”—the product and producer of numerous overlapping systems and discourses (economic, political, aesthetic, demographic, regulatory, spatial) that creates a bewilderingly complex, and dynamic, coherent, social totality.

The practice of PCS assumes that societies are fundamentally divided along hierarchically ordered lines of differentiation (i.e., those based on class, ethnic, gender, ability, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms), as realized through the operations of power and power relations within the social formation:

*Power operates at every level of human life; it is neither an abstract universal structure nor a subjective experience. It is both limiting and productive: producing differences, shaping relations, structuring identities and hierarchies, but also enabling practices and empowering social subjects... At the level of social life, power involves the historical production of “economies”—the social production, distribution, and consumption—of different forms of value (e.g., capital, money, meanings, information, representations, identities, desires, emotions, pleasures). It is the specific articulation of social subjects into these circuits of value, circuits which organize social possibilities and differences, that constructs the structured inequalities of social power (Grossberg, 1989)*

Following Grossberg, we contend that the various dimensions of physical culture represent moments at which such social divisions are imposed, experienced, and at times contested. PCS is, thus, driven by the need to understand the complexities, experiences, and injustices of the physical cultural context it confronts (particularly with regard to the relations, operations, and effects of power). Hence, at its most fundamental level, PCS seeks to “construct a political history of the (physical cultural) present” (Grossberg, 2006, p. 2), through which it becomes possible to construct politically expedient physical cultural possibilities out of the historical circumstances it confronts. It is in this regard we can begin to recognize the motivation behind the project of PCS: a theoretically and empirically based understanding of various institutions, practices, and subjectivities through which physically active bodies are organized, regulated, and consumed in the service of particular power relations (prefigured on particular ability, class, ethnic, gender, generational, national, racial, and/or sexual norms and differences). Such a motivation also enforces an unequivocal “commitment to progressive social change” (Miller, 2001, p. 1), and thereby struggles to produce the type of knowledge through which it would be in a position to intervene into the broader social world, and *make a difference*. One often-overlooked consequence of this is that PCS’ relationship with theory is necessary, yet ambivalent and certainly unpredictable. As with the cultural studies project itself, the mobilization of social and cultural theorizing is “never about finding ‘the right theory’, or demonstrating one’s theoretical acumen, or playing some theoretical chess game of one-up-manship. It is about understanding what is going on, and therefore, it is about finding out whatever theoretical positions will enable that project” (Wright, 2001, p. 134).

In what we might term a pernicious present<sup>1</sup>, we need to be prepared to confront the injustices of a particular society or public sphere, unembarrassed by



the label political, and unafraid to consummate a relationship with emancipatory consciousness (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). We need an approach concerned with issues of power and justice and the ways the economy, class, race, gender, ideologies, discourses, education, religion, and other social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to create an unjust social system and produce work targeted toward the present conjuncture (e.g., neocolonialism and neoimperialism) that can empower individuals by confronting injustices and promoting social change. In short, the project of PCS needs to be a pragmatics of hope in an age of cynical reason (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). This is an approach that is enconced in the need to reclaim education as a public good and recognize that academic labor is a social endeavor. Therefore, theoretical work is not an end in itself. PCS must be *meaningful* through connecting private troubles and public concerns, extending its critical, performative, and utopian impulses to address urgent social issues in the interests of promoting social change (Giroux, 2001b).

Given the position advocated above, we believe there exist a number of epistemological currents that run through the project of PCS. We are in a moment in which, at one and the same time, it appears necessary to confront the methodological fundamentalism (see House, 2005; Murray, Holmes & Rail, 2008; Silk, Bush & Andrews, 2010) that threatens to promote “evidence” based research as the only type of research that “counts.” It, thus, becomes even more important to grasp hold of a utopian research agenda that criticizes the existing order of things and uses the terrain of culture and education to actually intervene in the world. This involves a struggle to change the current configurations of power and the allocation of resources in society and to push for politically motivated research that has an explicit concern with ending inequality (see Denzin, 2005; Giroux 2004; 2005). PCS is, thus, a moral allegorical and therapeutic project avowed in its commitment to a project of social justice that can help us imagine a radical progressive democracy. It is, in short, a project that can, and should, “take sides” (Denzin, 2002a; p. 487; Denzin, 2005) as researchers align themselves with particular groups, categories, or actors in such a way as to serve that group’s interests. Such explicit demonstrations of partisanship have permeated social research for at least 40 years: feminist researchers have explicitly pronounced their goal as the emancipation of women, antiracist researchers are committed to the struggle against white racism, and, disability researchers formulate their goal as empowering the disabled to emancipate themselves from the conditions imposed upon them by an able-bodied society (Hammersley, 2000). Such partisanship suggests that the death knell of value neutral research has sounded. Indeed, in a landmark article in the journal *Social Problems* in 1967, Howard Becker proposed that all sociologists are inevitably partisan, that there could be no objective viewpoints and that sociologists should explicitly pronounce “whose side we are on” (Becker, 1967, p. 239). Yet, we are proposing a somewhat different take on taking sides. Becker held that political positions should *emerge* from findings that in turn emanate from the application of robust scientific methods and quality criteria. Thus Becker’s “political radicalism...is a *by-product* of a sound scientific approach” (Hammersley, 2000, p. 80, our emphasis). This emphasis on scientific method with political considerations clearly secondary is at odds with an advocacy position that *centralizes* and *internalizes* the moral, ethical, and political value of scholarship (see Amis & Silk, 2008).

Internalizing and centralizing morality, ethics, and the political is likely to encumber rethinking the civic and political responsibilities of academics. Giroux (2001b) proposes that cultural workers and intellectuals engage in intertextual negotiations across different sites of production to assume their roles as engaged critics and cultural theorists. In essence, Giroux (2001b, p. 6) is advocating “border crossing” that will allow for:

intellectual work to become both theoretical and performative . . . marked by forms of invention, specificity, persuasion, and critique as well as an ongoing recognition of the border as partial, fluid, and open to the incessant tensions and contradictions that inform the artists/educators own location, ideology, and authority in relation to particular communities and forms of social engagement.

In many ways, Giroux’s position draws on Said’s notion of intellectual amateurism in which we are physically and metaphorically exiled from our offices to connect with the political realities of society and in which we are encouraged to maintain critical distance from official or institutional bodies so that we can speak truth to power (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Said, 1994). Giroux’s (2001b; 2004) border crossing advocates a view of intellectual work that retheorizes the role of cultural workers and engaged artists in keeping justice and ethical considerations alive in progressive discourses and in revitalizing a broader set of social, political, and pedagogical considerations within a radical cultural politics. Drawing on the tradition of political work indebted to Williams and Hall, and continued through, among others, Mouffe, Fraser, and Grossberg, Giroux (2001b) is calling for critical educators and cultural scholars to break down the artificial barriers, the separate spaces, and the different audiences that are supported through the infrastructure of disciplinary and institutional borders that “atomize, insulate and prevent diverse cultural workers from collaborating across such boundaries” (p. 7). In this formulation, pedagogy becomes central to cultural politics and socially engaged citizenship; intellectual activity thus becomes a public exercise that includes how knowledge, values, identities, and social practices are produced and disseminated across a wide range of cultural sites and locations (Giroux, 2001b). This means conversations with those in the street, the artists, the performers, the architects, the media, as well as opening spaces within our classrooms, within our texts, our academic journals, and our conferences for discussion of personal injuries and private terrors that we can translate into public considerations and struggles (Giroux, 2001b). We are not suggesting we all abandon our offices and inhabit the spaces we probably know we should be in, but we are suggesting that such *border crossings* should be held alongside the classroom, the journal, the book chapter, and the conference presentation as key spaces in which intervention and understanding can take place within the project of PCS.

Reconceptualizing the role and place of the “academic” is likely to rub against many of the “standards” to which our work is held. Take for example the tenure review committee; how will they “count” the oppositional art work created with the local artist, the poesis produced, the play performed at the community hall, or, for that matter, the public talk given at a residents meeting? Equally, how will the Institutional Review Board—an institution ground in a liberal Enlightenment philosophy built on value free social science that shies away from politics and

morality and which proffers research with a disinterested position—cope with any form on nonutilitarian ethics (Christians, 2005)? Following Christians (2005), such a constricted understanding of ethics in “science” does not seem at all adequate for intervention, for understanding “science” and “education” as a regimen of power that helps to maintain the social order by normalizing subjects into categories designed by political authorities, for oppositional politics, for, if you like, an insurgent PCS. Rather, an alternative ethical approach is required that does not search for neutral principles to which all parties can appeal, does not see people as receptacles for data, as outsiders excluded from the research process, and, that breaks down the role of researcher as expert. Such a reciprocal or social ethical approach erases any distinction between epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics and is located within a feminist communitarian model that rests on a complex view of moral judgments as integrating into an organic whole various perspectives—everyday experience, beliefs about the good, and feelings of approval and shame—in terms of human relations and social structures (Christians, 2005; Denzin, 2005). In practical terms, this is an ethical approach that is based on interpretive sufficiency rather than experimentalism and instrumental sufficiency (technical, exterior, statistically precise). It asks that we participate in a community’s ongoing process of moral articulation and offer a representational adequacy free from racial, class, gender stereotyping. It is part of an effort to enable people to come to terms with their everyday experiences themselves, and, through the generation of social criticism, leads to resistance and empowers to action those who are interacting (Christians, 2005).

This is an ethical approach within PCS that relies on an ethics of care, puts community before persons, identifies subtle forms of oppression and imbalance, is the opposite of an individualist utilitarianism in that it is compassionate and respectful of the mosaic of particular communities and ethnic identities, and teaches us to address questions about whose interests are regarded as worthy of debate (Christians, 2005). Advocating an alternate form of ethical practice is, of course, likely to meet resistance and struggle, especially as ethical approval is a central component in external funding applications. Yet, the epistemological currents sweeping through PCS research point toward what Denzin (2005) terms an interpretive sufficiency in which ethics is *measured* with regard to a politics of resistance, hope, and freedom and in which the researcher’s responsibility is toward those studied. In this way, epistemology becomes both dialogical and aesthetic, it involves a give and take and ongoing moral dialogue between persons, it enacts an ethic of personal and community responsibility (Collins, 1991), and politically, the aesthetic embodies an ethic of empowerment which enables social criticism and engenders resistance (Christians, 2000). In many respects, this approach mirrors the (rediscovered) work of Friere (1970) whose approach centered on the import of education and social action as pillars of emancipatory research. His critical pedagogy eschewed what he termed domesticated traditional education, asserting instead that marginalized and oppressed groups needed education for liberation and that research provided opportunity to develop a dynamic understanding informed by critical thought and action—conscientization—toward a goal of critical consciousness in which the individual is empowered to think and act on the critical conditions around him or her and relate these conditions to the larger contexts of power in society (see Friere, 1970; Giroux, 2001b; Kamberlies & Dimitriadis, 2005; Saukko, 2003; Truman, Mertons & Humphries, 2000). Drawing upon Friere, Christians, Giroux,

and Denzin, the epistemology of PCS is not just about empowering people. Rather, it is about helping people to empower themselves, determining what research can do for them (not us), and placing knowledge at their disposal to use in whichever ways they wish. As Christians (2000, p. 148) proposed:

research helps persons imagine how things could be different. It imagines new forms of human transformation and emancipation. It enacts these transformations through dialogue. If necessary, it sanctions nonviolent forms of civil disobedience, understanding that how this ethic works in any specific situation cannot be given in advance.

The epistemological essence then of PCS in this formulation is revised into a sacred humanistic discourse on care, solidarity, and universal human rights (Denzin, 2005; Denzin & Giardina, 2006). As opposed to a concern with how to “get better data,” critical research into, on, and with the physical becomes about enabling community life to prosper, equipping people to come to mutually held conclusions, about community transformation and participation at all stages of the research process (from design through analysis through interpretation through implementation): a situated and shared morality in which social science is reformulated as a moral and social space that is measured against a universal respect for dignity (Denzin, 2005). This *sacred-moral* approach, ground in the work of Denzin, Christians and others, becomes a civic, participatory, collaborative project, a project that joins the researcher with the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue (Kemmis & McTaggart 2005, p. 568). The purpose, then, of PCS becomes a radical democratic practice that is equally theoretical, pedagogical, political, moral, and ethical, involving the enhancement of moral agency, the production of moral discernment, a commitment to praxis, change, justice, an ethic of resistance, and a performative pedagogy that resists oppression (Denzin 2002b; Giroux, 2001b; Humphries, 2000; Lincoln & Denzin, 2005).

## A Radically Contextual PCS

If we accept a sacred-moral epistemology as a guiding principle, then how, exactly, do we *practice* PCS? It is tempting here to eschew responsibility as many have done before (ourselves included) and hide behind the all too easily thrown around “anything goes” mentality posited by critics and advocates alike. While there is no particular way to “do” cultural studies analyses of the physical, such a position would work against the “perpetual” unity in difference (Hall, 1992) that characterizes the multiple theoretical influences, methods, and sites of cultural analyses, it is our intent here to restate—and by restate we point to the first, and seemingly ignored, iteration of this call in Andrews (2002)—that which we feel should form the core, methodologically speaking, of a piece of PCS research: articulation. From that base, we address the necessary interdisciplinary nature of the project before considering the methodological faces that may be engaged when practicing—a term preferred by Johnson and colleagues (2004) to the scientism of the term method—PCS.

Our methodological approach then, developing the earlier works of McDonald and Birrell (1999), Andrews (2002), and King (2005), is rooted in engaging society as a concrete, historically produced, fractured totality made up of different types

of social relations, practices, and experiences.<sup>2</sup> This involves a concerted effort to discern the conjunctural complexities of particular instances of the physical by mapping, however crudely, the “lines or connections which are the productive links between points, events or practices ... within a multidimensional and multidirectional field” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 50). It is in this way that the physical is engaged and interpreted as a fluid, dynamic category, whose definition and composition is contingent on the specificities of the context (both synchronic and diachronic) in question. Moreover, while physical cultural practices are produced from specific social and historic contexts, they are also actively engaged in the ongoing constitution of the conditions out of which they emerge. The method implicit within Hall’s articulated conjuncturalism is thus about *reconstructing a context* within which an instance of the physical becomes understandable. It is aggressively nonreductionist (the multiplicity of forces and effects deny the possibility of reducing causality to one factor such as the economic), yet contingently determinate (it acknowledges the notion of determinacy but stresses its multidirectionality, fluidity, and uncertainty), and articulatory theory/method that implores the researcher to actively (re)create context by “forging connections between (forces) practices and effects” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 54).

If PCS is concerned then with radically contextualizing the physical, the empirical core of the practice of PCS is the litany of physical *events* or practices; the negotiated engagement with which contributes to the formation of individual subjectivities. From this point of relative abstraction, it is necessary to map the various dimensions and directions of determinacy, acknowledging that, in each case, these are largely—no wholly—arbitrary, connections. These will include, among others, *forces* that point to broader sociohistoric trajectories (such as postindustrialism, post-Fordism), *institutions*, entities, or sites (in Frow and Morris’ (2000) terms) at which social actions and experiences are organized and directed in particular ways (such as institutions responsible for spiritual, economic, and corporeal governance), *processes* that represent the various operations through which the compulsions of social forces and institutions becomes actualized and operationalized, and *discourses* that can be the conduit linking forces, institutions, processes, and subjective experiences, since they can provide both the ideological rationale for the trajectories of social forces, and the operations of institutions, while also incorporating subjectivity through which the process of self-identification (and indeed, self-governance), are engaged and experienced. To practice PCS then means recognizing that physical cultural forms (e.g., practices, products, institutions) can only be understood by the way in which they are *articulated* into a particular set of complex social, economic, political, and technological relationships that comprise the social context; recognizing that “there are no necessary correspondences in history, but history is always the production of such connections or correspondences” (Grossberg, 1992, p. 53). It is through this theory/method that PCS aims to provide a context within which a physical “*event*” becomes understandable. In this way, PCS scholarship does not fall back on some form of teleological determinism, based on a priori assumptions about the effectivity and direction of power. Rather, the aim is to discern the state of conjunctural power relations, directions, and effects: the “state of play in (physical) cultural relations” (Hall, 1981, p. 235).

Despite necessary differences in empirical focus and theoretical arsenal, PCS is predicated on a “performative (physical cultural) pedagogy” (Giroux, 2001b, p. 7)

in which empirical theorizing becomes the basis for “intervening into contexts and power ... in order to enable people to act more strategically in ways that may change their context for the better” (Grossberg, 1996, p. 143 in Giroux, 2001b). PCS is, thus, political in the sense of identifying, and analyzing—and thereby seeking to intervene into—the operation and the experience of power relations (sometimes liberatory, oftentimes repressive, frequently both) through the examination of the (contested) realm of everyday physical. Hence, the practice/method of PCS involves identifying an “event,” almost in an abstract sense, that represents a potential important focus of critical inquiry (in as much as it is implicated in hierarchical, iniquitous, unjust power relations and effects). Thus follows a process of connecting/articulating this “event” to the multiple material and ideological determinations which suture the event—in a dialectic sense—into the conjuncture of which it is a constituent element. The commitment to, and practice of, articulation thus involves: “starting with the particular, the detail, the scrap of ordinary or banal existence, and then working to unpack the density of relations and of intersecting social domains that inform it” (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 354). This is a practice that involves what Fine (1994) has termed “working the hyphen;” thinking critically about the various points of critical consciousness that can attach the lives of the private individuals, the texts, the institutions who form the essence of our scrap of ordinary to structures (e.g., racial, gendered, economic, national, global) in our efforts to understand the physical, transform public consciousness, and common sense.

At a methodological level what does this actually mean for our academic field? In the first instance, it requires eschewing any pretense of disciplinarity: accepting the conventions of a particular discipline as a natural way of producing knowledge and viewing a particular aspect of the world. Indeed, as Kincheloe (2001) points out, if the traditional disciplines of our current moment are far from fixed, uniform, and monolithic—it is not uncommon for scholars in PCS and/or the sociology of sport to report that we have more in common with others in different fields of study, we live in a scholarly world with faded disciplinary boundary lines—the research work needed involves opening elastic conversations and analytical frames among, across, and outside of, established disciplines. Developing Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) use of the research bricolage, Kincheloe’s (2001) bricoleur transcends reductionism, understands the complexity of the research task, and is concerned with multiple methods of inquiry and with diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act. This approach is able to surpass the limitations of a single method, the discursive strictures of one disciplinary approach, the historicity of certified modes of knowledge production, the inseparability of the knower and the known, and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human forms (Kincheloe, 2001). Somewhat modifying Kincheloe (2001) then, PCS requires an array of interdisciplinary bricoleurs to operate in the ruins of the disciplinary temple, to produce a postapocalyptic PCS where certainty and stability have long departed for parts unknown and who recognize, among other issues, that research is socially constructed. It involves recognizing that much of what passes as scholarship are value-laden projects that operate under the banner of objectivity. This is an approach that does not allow our methodologies and the knowledge they produce to fit neatly into disciplinary draws. Instead, we are far more likely to employ practices that are interdisciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional, but connected to a broader notion of cultural politics designed to further

a multiracial, economic, and political democracy—projects that connects theory to social change, analysis to practical politics, and academic inquiry to public spheres (Denzin, 2005).

PCS researchers also need to be cognizant that the majority of cultural analysts need to accept their partiality and provide accounts that are openly incomplete, partisan, and insist on the political dimensions of knowledge (Frow & Morris, 2000). Of course, these are practices that violate academic neutrality, politicize the educational process, and contaminate the virtues of academic civility (Giroux, 2001a). Yet if we, as a field, are to make difference in the world (as opposed to simply reflecting it), then there is a need to address the need for action and articulate the political goals (of the researcher and the academy), be practice oriented, applied, and address the relationship between academia and nonacademia (and here we are borrowing from Bourdieu (1977) who revolutionized the manner in which praxis, practice, and interaction was defined in anthropology). Rather than interrogate, debate, and deliberate, we need to make visible and challenge the grotesque inequalities and intolerable oppression of the present moment (Giroux, 2001a). As socially responsible scholars we will need to operate across, between, and beyond approaches to the empirical and face new challenges and oppositions in “representing responsibility” (Fine et al., 2000, p. 108) in transforming public consciousness and common sense about physical culture. Boundaries need to be crossed, taken for granted work routines questioned, new environments, and new outlets investigated.

As we attempt to understand and intervene in the disparate structures that meet in and flow through the physical *event*, we are likely to encounter an array of contexts that will need investigation. Somewhat adapting Frow and Morris (2000), this is likely to involve: an account of the local and global economic context; the aesthetic context; the political context that addresses the mundane and the politics of physically active bodies in space, gendered and racialized context (such as the organization of gender and racial relations by a mythologized spatial structure); the historical context; a consideration of physical forms, structures, and experiences as a textual construct and as a form of popular culture directly interrelated with other cultural forms and with an economy of representations and practices that make up a way of life; and in an effort to get at the particularities of lived experience, deployment of various strategies of inquiry. This, likely far from exhaustive, list points to the interplay between physical lived experiences (lived realities), texts (discourses / discursive mediation), and the social context (Saukko, 2003). Within each of these spheres or surfaces that we engage, we need a diverse methodological arsenal—from discourse analysis to participatory action research, survey work to writing as a method of inquiry—that will range, in our various projects, across the spectrum of (non)preferred approaches. At this juncture, and in an effort not to be prescriptive, Saukko (2003) suggests we be sensitive to three methodological currents that she translates into validities: 1) a contextual validity that analyzes social and historical processes to ensure we are sensitive to local realities; 2) dialogic validity that captures the depth, breadth, balanced nuance, self-reflexive awareness, and is dialogically entwined with the discourses and social contexts that shape experiences; and, 3) a self-reflexive validity that recognizes how discourses shape or mediate how we experience or shape our selves and our environment. If we are faithful to these “validities” in each of the connections we forge in articulation, the

physical event will not only become more visible to us, but will be opened up to provide instances of interpretation and thus, intervention. That is, as we critically interrogate the banal, the ordinary, connecting it to wider social forces, we will deploy a series of strategies and practices ground within a sacred-moral epistemology. If ours is a political and moral project, and we think it is, in which we have an obligation to create radical, utopian spaces within our institutions, and indeed, if this is a project that works with, for, of, oppressed and marginalized groups, then we are likely to use forms of research strategies that offer opportunity for advocacy and empowerment—an approach that is likely to encompass *dialogical* methodologies (Denzin, 2005).

## The PCS Methodological Toolbox

Of course, picking from our methodological toolboxes will depend on a multitude of factors—by no ways limited to the complexities of the setting, the varied constituents involved in the design, and, the potential uses and users of the research. As Johnson and colleagues (2004) have advocated, choosing among methods relates to who we are (our own forms of partiality and positionality), the process of questioning (what we want to know) and our relationship to our subjects (who we wish to dialogue with, the differences and similarities of our situations). However, and no matter what specific methodological strategies we deploy, if PCS is predicated on making a particular physical event understandable, we are all going to be in a process of negotiating the I-thou dialogue that is fundamental in all research. That is, there exists a continuum of methodological strategies ranging from textual analysis through full scale autobiographies, from oral history to interview based methods, from ethnography to auto-ethnography, all of which involve recognition of the nature of differences and forms of power that circle around the self and other (Johnson et al., 2004). Our methods then are dialogic, they involve dialogue “between the researching self and sources of different kinds”; but, dialogue is also internal, it happens “within the researcher” as we revise, critique and reformulate our understandings (Johnson et al., 2004, p. 77). That we hover between self and other, between text and self, and between interpretation and self, and maintain an “in-betweeness” (Johnson et al., 2004) throughout the research process is perhaps a necessary consequence, if not feature, of our self-reflexive dialogic methodologies.

While all of our research is necessarily dialogic in type, certain methodological approaches, ground within a sacred-moral epistemology, are perhaps better suited to dealing with the most pressing social issues—from health and healing, human rights and cultural survival, environmentalism, violence, war, genocide, immigration, poverty, racism, equality, justice and peace—of our time. Methodologies that can heal the split between the public and private worlds by connecting the autobiographical impulse with the ethnographic (the inward and outward gazes), recognizing ourselves as the conduits through which we make sense of our own, and others, social worlds, are those that appear best suited to the project of PCS. As Abu-Lughod, (1993) proposes, “no longer can [PCS] hide behind a false border between the self and other; rather the time is ripe to bridge this gap, and reveal both parties as vulnerable experiencing subjects working to coproduce knowledge.” In this sense, this is a PCS “on location,” a space in which to use personal stories to



create calculated disturbances in social, cultural and political networks of power (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 782). Yet it is not just in the *(auto)biographical* or the *(auto)ethnographic* that such considerations are important. Rather, such critical, self-reflexive scholarship, runs throughout all strategies of inquiry, asking of us that we hold self and culture together, that we critique the situatedness of self with others in social contexts. PCS for example is ideally suited to various forms of *ethnographic methods*, such as *performance ethnographies* that can combine political, critical, and expressive actions centered on lived experiences locally and globally (Denzin, 2005) or *public ethnography* that understand and artistically portrays the pleasure and sorrows of daily life at home as well as in many out of the way places through passionately inscribing, translating and performing research to the general public (Tedlock, 2005). It is a PCS that does not abandon some of the hallmarks of the cultural studies approach that many of our practitioners have been trained in. Rather, it calls for these approaches to sit (un)happily and perhaps (un)comfortably alongside newer and perhaps more *avant garde* approaches. It, thus, asks for a contextualism in our *textual "readings"* (Johnson et al., 2004) through investigating the ways in which cultural texts emerge from and play a role in the changing historical, political, and social context (Saukko, 2003, p. 99), and, at the same time, for a focus on interpretations of the meanings of actors and the cultural forms they use, or that use them (Johnson et al., 2004). Further, it asks that we open up (often "innocent" physical) texts (film, television, written, electronic media) to reveal relations of power as we read of, and for, dominance (Johnson et al., 2004). It asks that *meetings*—methods that involve direct engagement between the self and others, or indeed, between different aspects of the self (relational or dialogic aspect of the engagement), including *thematic interview* and *focus groups*, and the longer, less structured conversations that are the features of *oral and life history*—are aware of the role of the self and relations with others (Johnson et al., 2004). Further, this is a PCS that is dialogic with regard to conversation between our different researcher selves, the multitude of self possibilities (Lincoln, 2001; Plummer, 2005). This is a dialogue between ourselves as participant and the self who can stand back, recall, listen around, be self-critical, and develop understanding and explanations—in essence, the self who can achieve conscious partiality; critical distance and (partial) identification (Johnson et al., 2004). We envisage uprooting those methodologies that have been appropriated by other disciplines and institutions—such as by marketing firms—and thus seen to lie outside of the remit of this approach. As Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) revealed in their revitalization of *focus group* work, a genealogy of such methods can disrupt the supposed foundation and pretended community of research. In this example, and drawing on Freire and Kozol, focus group research can be recast as a tool for enacting emancipatory politics, decentering the power of the researcher, *participatory research* that can help people feel in control of their own words and exist as spaces in which to exercise power over the material and ideological conditions of their own lives, raise critical consciousness and encourage engagement in praxis—political action in the real world (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005).

Through making such connections between the physical and the social totality, we feel that PCS is scholarship that engages in social critique and moral dialogue within specific physical cultural contexts (Denzin, 2005; see also Denzin & Giardina, 2006; Truman et al., 2000). Further, such work asks us to be fluent across

methods—and those named above, autobiographies, autoethnographies, ethnographies, textual analyses, interviews, focus groups, life histories, participatory action research, are likely just starting points—that engage with community struggles, and theorize conditions of social injustice; that is work that recognizes that flickers and movements for social change do not exclusively happen in the classroom and the academy but in various sites (church groups, community based organizations, in the locker room, on the playing field) and texts (Fine et al., 2000). That said, we do not suggest an abandonment of the lecture theater. Rather, we agree with Said (in Rizvi & Lingard, 2007), we learn through teaching: the presence of students provokes thinking and learning in a productive mediation absent from the often-solitary work of the scholar.

Of course, such calls are likely easier to make than actualize. Our students may well push us to such strategies, and we may feel compelled to do so. Yet, we may also need to retrain to effectively aid our students come to terms with such a conception of PCS (yet we may not have the time to do so for we are meant to be writing funding applications!). Often when we deliver our graduate research methods courses we realize that we are woefully out of touch with that which is at the “cutting edge” in the field of research, learning instead from the resources/scholarship that students bring to our attention. Indeed, a cursory, and thankfully very unscientific, glance at the texts used in such classes at our own institutions confirms such suspicions. Despite the concerns over our time (and perhaps our “authority” in the classroom), we need to be in a position to enable, question, and challenge to ensure rigor, quality, and aid in dealing with potential issues in practice. How, for example, do we (aid students) identify groups in “need” without essentializing that very group and thus legitimating their social control? Similarly, at what point do we, or our students, leave a setting in which we have been participating? How do we ensure we do not just extract knowledge, leave the community behind, or offer no benefit beyond the research? Worse still, how do we ensure the lack of harm once the support mechanism and level of appropriate support for participants has been disengaged (Phellas, 2000)? Indeed, following Dockery (2000), why would “locals” co-operate if they gain no benefit, have no control over the focus, the planning, the conduct, recommendations; and, who has the power to respond to, or act, upon findings? Finally, we may even question the premise on which we allow students to engage with methodologies ground within a moral-sacred epistemology when the benefits of such approaches are so contested within a corporatized University predicated on evidence-based epistemologies. We can only hope that a continued assault on scientific based, biomedical models of research, and a commitment to social justice will prevail. We will then be in a position to be proud of those students who graduate with PCS sensibilities and confident of a maturing and insurgent field.

## Expressing and Judging the Physical

As with our methodological choices, there are no prescriptions for how we express or judge PCS scholarship; inevitably though the processes of analysis, interpretation, and expression are politicized. We are going to make choices—practical, situational, moral, ethical, political—throughout our immersion in the field, in our empirical

disembedding, in our “double-dialogues” with our record of a person’s (including ourselves) words, in our theoretical abstractions (see Johnson et al., 2004), and with regard to how we express our research to multiple communities. Clearly, PCS scholarship has to move beyond what Sparkes (1995) termed persuasive fictions, a stripped down, abstracted, detached form of language, an impersonal voice, a conclusion of propositions, or formulae involving a realist or externalizing technique that objectify through depersonalized and supposedly inert representations of the disengaged analyst. Rather, our work needs more self-conscious texts that struggle with a whole set of claims related to authorship, truth, validity, and reliability and that bring to the fore some of the complex political/ideological agendas hidden in our writing (Richardson, 2000a, 2000b). The genre of representation has “blurred, enlarged and altered to include an accepted place for fictions, poetry, drama, conversations, readers’ theatre and so on” (Richardson, 2000b, p. 9). Yet, these developments are sparsely represented within the major journals in our fields. It is clear that “messy,” uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism, and new alternative works are required to displace classic forms of representation as the “only” legitimate form (e.g., Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Atkinson, 1992; Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Clough, 2001; James, Hockey & Dawson, 1997; Richardson, 2000a, 2000b, Sparkes, 1992; 1995). Indeed, reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis, and intertextual representation (Tedlock, 2000) offer the potential to opens up the critical interrogation of the physical to a plethora of intimate and previously “taboo” topics—friendship, love, sexuality, physical violence, rape, body habitus, sexuality, ethnicity, physicality, misogyny, gender politics, (marginal) subidentities, power, disempowerment, diaspora, postcolonial narratives of race, nationalism and international politics, exercise disorder behavior (a far from exhaustive list)—providing space for marginalized voices in important steps toward the democratization of (physical) knowledge (Tedlock, 2000) and provide the route by which our own cultures can be made strange to us, allowing for new descriptions of the world to be generated which can offer the possibility of improvement of the human condition (Barker, 2000). Further, and in embracing such forms of expression, we should heed Giroux’s (2001b, p. 10) warning that the performative cannot be a mere “textual gesture,” outside of the context of history, power, and politics. Rather, the “political and ethical character of the performative are enhanced when politics is not seen as merely symbolic but is inserted into societal contexts and linked to collective struggles over knowledge, resources, and power” (Giroux, 2001b, p. 10).

Expressing PCS scholarship—and we use the term “expression” markedly to distinguish it from the rather limiting and outdated “written” product—cannot hide behind any form of pretense of an “invisible author” (Ferguson et al., 1992). Given the epistemological grounding of the research, the researcher’s moral and political values are not something messy and untidy, to be taken care of by tight method, or even by attempts to bracket assumptions. Rather, there is a need to consciously acknowledge our positionalities (Harrison, et al., 2001). Yet, we need to ensure that situating ourselves in our work does not lead, at best, to esoteric or narcissistic navel gazing scholarship (e.g., Anderson, 1999; Sparkes, 1995), and at worst, to subtler forms of what Fine (1992) terms “ventriloquy.” Fine (1992) suggests ventriloquy occurs when we appear to let the “other” speak, yet, all the while, we hide, unproblematically, under the covers of the marginal, now “liberated” voices. Similarly, Johnson et al. (2004) point to the dangers of the slip from authorship to

orchestration in hiding the power of authorial function. Rather than let voices act as confabulatory camouflage, there is a need to be committed to positioning ourselves as self-conscious, critical, and participatory analysts, engaged but still distinct from our informants—an agenda committed to the study of change, the move toward change, and/or committed to change (Harrison et al., 2001). This is an agenda that addresses issues that concern questioning the hierarchies of the researched and the researcher, calling for us to reflect on that relationship as we minimize status difference, show our human side, answer questions raised in the field instead of hiding behind a cloak of anonymity, and recognize that our research products are coproduced accomplishments (see Fontana & Frey, 2005; Harrison, MacGibbon & Morton, 2001). Further, it requires us stepping back from the desire to “get good data;” we are enjoined to move beyond a concern for more and better data to think about how we can work to empower the researched. As a field, PCS could learn from Bauman (2005) who, building on Derrida, has argued that we require intimacy and distance. The trick, he argues, is “to be at home in many homes but to be inside and outside at the same time, to combine intimacy with the critical look of an outsider, involvement with detachment” (p. 1091). Indeed, we may well need to be aware of what Said (1994) termed the extraordinary persistent residual of our own exilic marginality: an exile from our rigid professional affiliations and a recognition of detachment from those with whom we engage to produce resistive academic work that can “write back” to imperial power, can read contrapuntally, can speak to justice, and can challenge injustice (Rizvi & Lingard, 2006; Said, 1994).

Expressing our scholarship then requires decentering, if not wholeheartedly displacing, that form of scientific writing that we would argue still holds onto, even if by a thread, the center within the major journals in our field. We envision a PCS in which expressions do not simply record a multiplicity of viewpoints, but those where dominant versions, including the researchers’ version, are challenged, extended, or repositioned (Johnson et al., 2004). Following Richardson and St Pierre (2005), we need to encourage writing as a method of data collection (sensual data, emotional data, response data; data which were not were data were supposed to be) that elicits points that would have escaped entirely had they not been written (they are “collected” only in writing). Further, we need to use writing as a method of data analysis—using writing to think, to make connections—that provides the conditions for thought to happen *in* writing (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). This is an approach that does not allow for conventional practices of coding and sorting then grouping and then section headings that organize and sort writing into an outline in advance. Further, it renders audit trails, member checking, data verification, triangulation, data saturation, peer debriefing, as absurd (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005). Such a democratization of writing practices may open our critical work on physical culture to those scholars who have been unable, or find themselves too uncomfortable, to contribute. This could indeed bring about a critique of Western ethnocentric practices in our field, give voice and space to marginalized peoples, and provide the basis for epistemologies from previously silent groups (Tedlock, 2000). In this way, a democratization of expression can lead toward the democratization of physical knowledge, providing the field an opportunity to realize the political potential in *disrupting inequality*.

If expressing PCS scholarship then requires that we “come clean at the hyphen” that separates and merges personal identities with our inventions of others, thereby

offering a series of self-reflective points of critical consciousness around questions of how to represent responsibly, transform public consciousness and common sense about social injustice (see Fine, 1992; Harrison et al., 2001), critical questions remain over where we target our efforts. As indicated earlier, to make a difference, to take sides, to be “true” to a communitarian ethic, does require accessible and public forms of expression (see Denison & Rinehart, 2000; Markula & Denison, 2005; Sykes, Chapman, & Swedberg, 2005). Indeed, we agree with Ladson-Billings and Donnor (2005) that we must transcend disciplinary boundaries if we are to have impact upon those who reside in subaltern sites or on policy makers. This means that we cannot spend their time talking to each other in the netherworld of the academy or just write in obscure journals and publish books in languages that do not translate to the lives and experiences of real people (and we are perhaps more guilty than others in this regard). Indeed, following Fine et al. (2000) we do have an ethical responsibility to retreat from the stance of academic dispassion and aid in educating our students in the languages of policy talk, in the voices of empiricism, through the murky swamps of self-reflective story writing, and in the more accessible language of pamphlets, fliers, and community booklets. Yet, as we remind ourselves of our locations in corporatized Universities and of “accepted” forms of scholarship preferred by tenure review committees, Doctoral advisors, journal editors, and, funding bodies, we have to caution against a wholesale evacuation of “traditional” forms of expression. Rather, there is a need for multiple genres to coexist, however unhappily, alongside each other, for each to be valued, held to multiple criteria, and to educate students to analyze, express, and publish differential works in differential spaces (that is, a paper to be delivered at a public meeting may well, but is certainly not preordained to be, differentially conceived than that for a formal Doctoral thesis in an arcane academic discipline). This is perhaps not the way it ought to be, and it is indeed, the very point of disrupting disciplines. Yet, our ethical responsibilities surely must still extend to those who are being trained for a life of scholarship. Perhaps there is future hope in the scholarship of Richardson (e.g., Richardson 2000a/b; Richardson & St. Pierre, 2005) who has not been afraid to situate herself within storied writing and address abuses of power inherent in disciplinary constraints, academic debates, departmental politics, social movements, community structures, research interests, familial ties, and personal history. No matter how we continue to exist within institutional constraints, Richardson and St Pierre (2005) point toward a PCS whose expression needs to adapt to the kind of social / political world we inhabit—a world of uncertainty. It will require us to engage in self-reflexivity, will need us to abandon our preferences and give in to synchronicity, and not flinch from where the writing takes one emotionally or spiritually. In short, we hope that expressing the physical can be a field of “play where anything can happen” (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005) that will allow for intervention in ways that make political action and change possible.

Our call for PCS scholarship that is capable of taking sides, that affirms the contextual and the specific, and that is always searching for more social justice, finds itself butting up against an intensified set of “rigorous” academic criteria designated by the National Research Council (NRC) in the United States and bodies such as the Evidence for Policy and Practice Information (EPPI) in the U.K. and the Research Quality Framework (RQF) in Australia (see Cheek, 2006, House, 2006; Morse, 2006). In this regard, how can we judge work which, oftentimes, falls

down against such criteria. With Richardson (2000a; 2000b), we feel that a sound starting point is to judge how such scholarly works make a “substantive contribution” to understanding social life *and* to advancing academic knowledge. Let us be clear here however, we are not suggesting that such work is an easier proposition. Rather, PCS work may well be held to even more “rigorous” standards than their more “traditional” counterparts. The “rigor” to which we are referring, is anchored within a sacred-moral epistemology, whether instances of PCS investigation are informed, at every step of the way (see for example our discussion of Saukko’s methodological validities), by commitment to a civic agenda, with the aim of enhancing moral discernment, and with the desire to promote social transformation and critical consciousness (Denzin, 2005). In this way, criteria for judging a politics of liberation are neither mechanical nor terminal. Rather, they embody the emancipatory notion of praxis in which knowledge is not only about finding out about the world, but also about changing it. Of course, evaluation criteria in this formulation are necessarily political and moral and require a debunking of the traditional criteria of validity, generalizability, credibility, and believability of our research—as assessed by the academy, our communities, and our participants—as we judge on how we serve the interests of those who are researched, and how those research participants have more of a say at all points of the project (Denzin, 2002a/b; Harrison et al., 2001; Madriz, 2000).

Adapting Fine et al. (2000), a set of (partial) self-reflexive points of critical consciousness might be useful in providing a roadmap of what such judgment criteria might look like, feel like, and what it embodies. Fine et al., (2000, pp. 126–7) ask the researcher to consider whether they have connected the voices and stories of individuals back to the set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated (is the physical empirical addressed in context). Further, they ask if research has deployed multiple methods so that very different kinds of analysis have been constructed. They ask whether we have described the mundane (as opposed to the unique or startling) and provided the opportunity for some informants/constituencies/participants to review the material and interpret, dissent, or challenge interpretations. They ask us to consider how such disagreements in perspective would be reported and how we have thought through the theorizing of informant’s words. Further has the research considered how these data could be used for progressive, conservative, repressive social policies? Has there been consideration of falling into the passive voice and has the researcher decoupled responsibility for interpretations. Has there been thought given to who the researcher would be afraid will see these analyses and who is rendered vulnerable/responsible or exposed by these analyses. Finally, they ask if consideration has been given to the extent to which analysis offers an alternative to the commonsense or dominant discourse and the challenges different audiences might pose.

While each instance of PCS will be different, will appeal to different constituents and will, therefore, likely be subject to situational, academic, aesthetic, and moral scrutiny—in different ways, and indeed, we hope, for a blurring of criteria across this range—we can begin to sketch the types of questions we can, and should, ask of our projects. In producing in-depth, intimate stories of problematic everyday life, lived up close, offering stories that create moral compassion and help citizens make intelligent decisions and take public action on private troubles (Denzin, 2000), we can ask if the research presents a civic discourse, offers the

writer as deeply knowledgeable about the local community, and exposes complacency, bigotry, and wishful thinking. Further, in thinking about quality, we can draw on criteria of accuracy, nonmaleficence, the right to know, making one's moral position public, demonstration of "interpretive sufficiency" (depth, detail, emotion, nuance, coherence, and representational adequacy), and freedom from racial, class, and gender stereotyping (see Amis & Silk, 2008). For example, Denzin (2002b) characterizes high quality research by its ability to decloak the seemingly race neutral and color-blind ways of administrative policy, political discourse, and organizational structures and experiences. Holman-Jones (2005) somewhat extends these criteria through asking whether the relationships between authors and participants are reciprocal, if we have created a space for meaningful dialogue among different hearts and bodies, if we have enacted our ethical obligation to critique subject positions, acts, and received notions of expertise and justice, if we have produced a self-referential tale that connects to other stories, discourses and contexts, and, if we have offered a charged atmosphere as incitement to act within and outside the context of the work.

There is clearly momentum afoot within the work of a number of scholars who have begun to conceptualize alternative, and more progressive, criteria through which we can judge PCS. We feel it is perhaps best to think of this particular juncture, given this momentum (and indeed given the wider political and economic context within which we operate), to look at this as an invitation of sorts to PCS scholars to think through the parameters of how our work should be judged. We feel this is an invite that we are not sure we can, ethically, refuse. It is a moment for PCS, as an emergent, even marginalized, field, to ensure we do not produce scholarly inquiry into, of, and on, that ignores, for the most part, the most pressing social problems of our time and produces a politics that offers nothing but more of the same (Giroux, 2001b). Thus, and no matter where we aim to make a difference—in the classroom, through public ethnography, in the academic journal, in the community, on the street, through poetry—PCS scholars need think about how to live the life of a social inquirer (Schwandt, 2000). Following Denzin's (2005) exploration of the Kaupapa Maori epistemology, we, as researchers, may want to ask the following about each instance of the PCS project: What research do we want done? Whom is it for? What difference will it make? Who will carry it out? How do we want the research done? How will we know it is worthwhile? Who will own the research? Who will benefit? (Denzin, 2005).

The "quality" of PCS scholarship then becomes part of the essence of the research design; it becomes *internalized* within the ontological, epistemological, and methodological contingencies of PCS rather than being something to be "tested" at the completion of the research (Amis & Silk, 2008). Like Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton's (2001) discussion of reciprocity this is a situated trustworthiness that surpasses validity, credibility, and believability, but not just in regard to assessment by the academy. Rather, trustworthiness is bound with reciprocity and a concern with how research is perceived by the community and by research participants. Judging quality then is reframed, encompassed with social criticism, engendering resistance, and helping persons imagine how things could be different (Denzin, 2002b). Further, given that it is personally and contextually situated, understanding how this ethic works in any specific situation cannot be given in advance, yet, we can argue that the project of PCS should become a contextualized civic, participatory,

collaborative project committed to community development, a project that joins the researcher with the researched in an ongoing moral dialogue (Christians, 2000; Denzin, 2002b).

## **Coda: Toward Practicing PCS**

We open this conclusion with a word of warning—this paper should perhaps be discarded at this point if you are in any way faint of heart; the comfortable, the tenured, the non/untentured, the graduate student, those who chip away at critical cultural analysis of sport within “science” dominated Departments. All may well (or may well not) agree with our arguments, finding them too dangerous, foolish, or discomfiting. For embracing the argument, congealing the intellectual project of PCS may very well require destabilizing self-reflexivity, having conversations with yet to be imagined parties, stepping outside the halls of academe, and a leaving behind of all that is academically agreeable. It will likely require admitting—for we are not sure that no matter how far our heads may be planted in the sand that we hold on to the sanctity of the University as a place of learning and discovery, if, that is, they ever were—that the institutions we inhabit and for which we spent so long (and so much money) preparing, are political and corporate entities that restrict our scholastic horizons. Indeed, within a present dominated by corporatized Universities and “evidence” what place for the intellectual, political, moral, emancipatory project of PCS? There is something quite disheartening, yet at the same time perhaps quite comforting, to think of how PCS will be so derided in a context that espouses what Lincoln and Cannella (2004) have termed a methodological fundamentalism that aggressively pushes evidence based progress, policies, and programs; in short, a nation of researchers locked into a governmental policy, research that “serves policy” (Atkinson in Lather, 2006; Denzin & Giardina, 2006; House, 2006), and the randomized experiment, as the only real “science” that “counts”? In tandem with this methodological fundamentalism, our institutes of higher education are increasingly commercialized and vocationalized as a source of profit for corporate interest—what Bauman (1999) calls the latest rendition of a society that has stopped questioning itself—that legitimate, promote, and essentially concretize research that serves industry, government, and funding bodies. Again, in the context of a baleful regimen and “academic” institutions serving as handmaidens for an increasingly blurred line of corporate / governmental interests, how do we carve out a space for critical interrogation of physical culture?

The work of avant garde scholars such as Denzin, Giroux, and Richardson has gone far from critiqued, yet we are convinced enough by their arguments to offer this tentative exploration through how we may ensure that the project of PCS practices meaningful research. There are many questions that remain unresolved, many to be raised, and many yet to be thought of. Scholars such as Atkinson and Delamont (2005) may well argue that we have privileged the graphos—the written word—in our research and our vision of what the PCS project should be. Maybe we have, and maybe others will aid us in thinking through sensibilities and contingencies of PCS, envisioning other ways of thinking, practicing, expressing that are yet to be imagined (and the papers in this special issue are testimony to this). Some may argue that the source of experience—the data, the face to face copresence—may



be lost in our political and moral emphasis (see Manning, 2002) and call for less emphasis on the “abstract” questions of “representation,” for relocating the task to the study of everyday sense-making rather than “cinematic glimpses”, “postcards from exotic venues”, or “deeply self-ruminating poetry” (Manning, 2002; Snow, 2002). Some may go further than this, suggesting our goals should not be political or moral, but that we should aim “at the more reasonable goal of securing a close approximation of the empirical world” (Snow & Morrill 1993, p. 10). Finally, there will be those who warn of the dangers in assimilating sociological representations into literary forms such as poetry and fiction and the subsequent potential to firmly and sometimes exclusively, recenter the author thereby creating a new basis for authorial privilege (Atkinson & Delamont, 2005). We expect, deserve, and welcome criticism; a healthy academic field is one in which contestation is a functional necessity and there are “valid” arguments to be made among many of these critics, some of which we envision will be furthered by scholars in our field as we debate the nature, scope, and purpose of the PCS project. Indeed, as may be expected, this is far from a neat and tidy narrative, we have had many debates among ourselves in writing this manuscript, we are far from agreed on many of the points of emphasis, and some of arguments are, thankfully, far from solipsistic as a result. We feel this is to be expected, and we believe that messier, less coherent texts with competing points of view will form a central part of the project. We hope that there will be disagreements, rejections, rejoinders that force us to reconsider part of the argument and that others take up and extend other parts of the argument, all of which will expand, contend, and push the boundaries and horizons of an emergent PCS.

We have spent considerable space in this paper postulating on what we feel *ought* to be, a potentially dangerous proposition lest we be accused of declaring a state of affairs that may not be universally shared among the practitioners of PCS; a presumption that, somewhat ironically, could be taken to privilege certain forms of scholarship over others. This is not our aim. Rather, we are far more interested in—and feel that there is greater progressive potential in—a field in tension, in healthy contestation, and in which debates surrounding ontology, epistemology, political intent, method, interpretation, expression, and impact will continue to be held and will not be neatly cleared up and tidied away as a result of this propositional, and perhaps, provocative paper. However, we do hope we have been able to raise questions, provide a space for thoughtful reflexivity, outline a set of approaches to the physical that perhaps more accurately represent the distillation of knowledge by those whose work addresses the physically active body, and indeed, aid the power of those of us in the academy to apply research so that it impacts, and is *meaningful* to a range of communities who we have the potential to touch. Indeed, it may be that only through practice, through actually getting out and doing—as opposed to talking about practice in somewhat esoteric terms, something which we are as complicit in as anyone else—that we will be in a position to really push and pull at the parameters of PCS. To those may dismiss this project out of hand, we need to be clear, we are not suggesting we leave behind the insights, theoretical development, impacts, and contributions brought to bear on the sociology of sport thus far. It would be a grave error and would be remiss were we not ground within the debates that have informed us to this present juncture. Our preferences, of course, are clear as we muse on the possibilities of PCS. We need critical interrogations into the physical that continually rework and question practices in the field in respect to

how well, and indeed how we have engaged, private troubles and personal concerns and extended the critical, performative, and utopian impulses to address urgent social issues in the interest of promoting social change (Giroux, 2001b). At the very least, we need to use theory as a resource to think and act, learning how to situate texts within historical and institutional contexts, and creating the conditions for collective struggles over resources and power . . . such a gesture not only affirms the social function of oppositional cultural work (especially within the [corporate] university) but offers opportunities to mobilize instances of collective outrage, if not collective action, against material inequalities. (Giroux, 2001b, p. 11)

We began this conclusion with a few words of warning, and perhaps we should end with additional concerns. A critical interrogation of the physical as contextual, interventionist, multimethodological, and interdisciplinary is a daunting prospect in and of itself, yet further, it is a project that is far from stable, perhaps better characterized by a state of perpetual flux and an urgent (and hopefully proactive) response to a crippling sociopolitical agenda. As we alluded to earlier, not only can such an approach likely not be realized within the confines of a doctoral program (a lifetime of scholarly pursuit is perhaps more accurate), the scholar may face difficulty with publication, tenure, funding, and may face ridicule from disciplinarians in regard to superficiality, especially when asked to transcend, facilitate, and cultivate, at times as yet unimagined, boundary work (Kincheloe, 2001; Lincoln, 2001). Yet, if we are truly interested in change, in mobilizing public opinion and bringing attention to inequalities then *our* crisis must be policed (see Silk et al., 2010). Another warning. Lincoln (2001) suggests that those who would police the crisis are themselves being policed—while highly visible individuals can feel safe and be rather too visible for harassment, what about the ordinary policers of crisis? In this regard, as Lincoln (2001) warns, silence, as opposed to protest, may well be the better part of valor. As public intellectuals we are left with a conundrum: “. . . whether to engage or not . . . What to police? And where? And in an era of shrinking civil rights to protest, what will be the costs?” (Lincoln, 2001, p. 273). Somewhat reworking Sennett and Sassen (2007), it seems we need to at least be aware of the dangers of engaging in that most suspicious of pursuits—committing physical cultural studies.

Despite such warnings, our position is clear: we should not be silent—the voices of the silenced, the marginalized, the oppressed, have been silent and suppressed for too long within the critical interrogation of the physical. PCS is predicated on understanding, critical reflection, and intervention to make a difference. We need to ensure that PCS scholarship is that which posits a “spirit in opposition, rather than in accommodation . . . in dissent against the status quo” (Said, 1994, p. 12) lest we be “mistaken for an anonymous functionary or careful bureaucrat” (Said, 1994, p. 13). For, if we are to hold true to the commitments of a critical and public pedagogy (Giroux, 2000; 2001a/b; Grossberg, 2006; McLaren, 1991), PCS researchers must remain vigilant in their struggle against “the disconnection” that will surely occur if we forsake the political imperative and allow our PCS to be “inhabited for merely academic purposes” by producing studies in which physical cultural forms are divorced from (contextual) analyses of “power and social possibilities” (Johnson, 1996, p. 78). Somewhat rearticulating Denzin (2004) then, critical cultural analyses of the physical are likely to be critical pedagogies and interpretive methodologies that push against totalitarian onslaughts, use language of critique and possibility,

connect diverse struggles, use theory as a resource, and define politics as not merely critical, but as an intervention into public life (Giroux, 2004). We need to do so in a context of methodological fundamentalism (House, 2005) when many of the practices which we suggest can aid us in assuming interdisciplinary, transgressive, and oppositional pedagogical practices, and our civic and political responsibilities (Giroux, 2001a) are threatened by the supposed legitimacy of the randomized field trial that conforms with conservative neoliberal programs and regimes that make claims regarding truth, the gold standard of scientific educational research (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005). We need to make our practices “count” despite this climate, not to be afraid of, indeed, panegyryze practices that contaminate, and, in the face of likely ridicule, pursue a socially and culturally responsive, communitarian, justice-oriented (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005) agenda. In short, and following Lincoln and Denzin (2005), we need a PCS that, at its heart, throughout its capillaries, and ingrained as the essence of its bones, is characterized by a sense of interpersonal responsibility and moral obligation on the part of researchers, responsibility and obligation to participants, to respondents and to consumers of research (including undergraduate and graduate students through the classroom), and to ourselves as field workers and scholars. Our stance is one that is “democratic, reciprocal, and reciprocating rather than objective and objectifying” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2005, p. 1118), a *meaningful* PCS with the intent to *displace, decentre, and disrupt*.

## Notes

1. By this we mean the “overlapping” (Frow & Morris, 2000) discourses of neo-liberalism, neo-conservatism, neo-imperialism, and neo-scientism, provide a context for locating the physical in a world in which violence is everywhere, democracy is under attack, the United States appear to be asserting an imperialist, empire building, project, a permanent war on the world based on a tyrannical (govern)mentality of conservative rhetoric centered on a peculiar or juridical concept of “right” (Baudrillard, 2001; Johnson, 2002; McClaren, 2002), that has manifestations and entanglements in multiple parts of the world and has an attendant racist and repressive agenda, in which there is a growing culture of surveillance, inequality and cynicism, and, a world in which there is an increase in the “moral” regulation and management of populations by those who act on our behalf (see Denzin, 2004a; Giroux, 2004, Hardt & Negri, 2000; Harvey, 2003). Given this, it appears that never before has there been a greater need for critical cultural studies analyses of the physical, indeed, the political intellectual purpose of physical cultural studies has never been as important within a world in which violence (often of a symbolic nature) serves to justify physical manifestations—the physical is, as a supposedly apolitical site, a key symbolic space that is central to this war on the everyday, the death of people, culture and truth (Denzin, 2004b).
2. There are a number of texts that deal explicitly with “method” in cultural studies, our students have found Saukko (2003); White & Schwoch (2006) & Johnson et al. (2004) most useful

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